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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1445  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHBN/AMCONSUL MELBOURNE IMMEDIATE 6306  
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH IMMEDIATE 4569  
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY IMMEDIATE 4529  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHMFSS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0800  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 0062  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 0862

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STATE FOR SRAP, SCA, EUR, PM AND EAP  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/29/2019  
TAGS: MARR MOPS PTER PREL AS  
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER RUDD ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL  
CONTRIBUTION TO AFGHANISTAN

REF: CANBERRA 293

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor John W. Crowley, for reasons  
1.4 (b),(d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced in a press conference April 29 that Australia would boost its troop contribution in Afghanistan from 1,100 to 1,550 troops, mostly for training and capacity building and to support the Afghan elections in August 2009, and that it would increase its financial contribution to the Afghanistan National Army Trust Fund by AUD 55 million (USD 39 million) per year. In light of the increasing unpopularity of the Afghan war, Rudd justified the new contributions in national interest terms: the need to achieve strategic denial of Afghanistan as a training ground for terrorists who had killed Australian citizens, and the need to fulfill Australia's obligations to the United States under the ANZUS treaty, which had been invoked after 9/11. The Prime Minister's announcement closely matched the preview he and Foreign Minister Smith provided to the President and the Secretary during recent phone calls, and, importantly, made clear to the public that conditions the GOA had set out as prerequisites to any new Afghanistan contribution had been fulfilled. End summary.

¶2. (U) PM Rudd said the new military inputs would include 100 additional troops who would form two Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLT) to join the existing Australian OMLT in Uruzgan Province; 70 troops for logistic support and force protection; another 120 soldiers to serve an eight-month deployment to provide security for the Afghan elections in August; a team of around 40 engineers to upgrade the Tarin Kowt airfield; and up to 70 staff to be embedded in U.S. or Coalition headquarters. The principal objective of the additional Australian troops would be to train the approximately 3,300 soldiers of the Afghan National Army's 4th Brigade, the PM said, adding that role would "inevitably involve operations in the field," flagging the prospect of increased Australian casualties.

¶3. (U) Rudd also announced plans to dispatch ten Australian Federal Police (AFP) officers to help train Afghan police forces but said the government will elaborate on the AFP's mission in the coming days. This civilian input would be

augmented by an unspecified but small number of civilian monitors to oversee polling in Uruzgan.

¶4. (U) Acknowledging the price Australia had already paid with ten military fatalities so far and many others wounded, PM Rudd stressed this was not an open-ended commitment. He said it was clear that the current strategy in Afghanistan was not working and the world was at "grave risk" of allowing the return of intensified terrorist activity. He said less security in Afghanistan meant less security for Australians and that "handing Afghanistan back to the terrorist will increase the threat for all Australians." Rudd also cited Qincrease the threat for all Australians." Rudd also cited Australia's "enduring commitment to the United States under the ANZUS Treaty, which was invoked in the days following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, as a fundamental factor in his decision to deploy additional troops.

¶5. (U) The Prime Minister's announcement coincided with release of an Australian National University (ANU) poll earlier in the day reporting that 53 percent of the Australian public approved of Australia's military participation in the war in Afghanistan, while 39 percent disapproved. However, the same ANU poll reported 69 percent of the public believed that the United States and its allies were losing the war while only 17 percent believed the U.S. and its allies were winning the war. The poll results were at variance with findings of a Newspoll conducted March 20-22 showing that 65 percent of Australians did not support sending more Australian troops to Afghanistan (reftel). An Age/Nielsen poll conducted March 30 reported 51 percent

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opposed Australia's current involvement and 66 percent opposed any increase in the number of Australian troops in Afghanistan.

¶6. (C) Comment: The Prime Minister's announcement generally matched the preview he and Foreign Minister Smith provided to the President and the Secretary during recent phone calls except for the contribution to the ANA Trust Fund, which appeared to have been modified somewhat, from AUD 200 million (USD 141 million) over five years to AUD 55 million (USD 39 million) per year for an unspecified period. In recent months, the Prime Minister, Defence Minister Fitzgibbon and other senior Australian officials had laid down conditions associated with any additional GOA contributions in Afghanistan, to include development of a clear strategy; greater military inputs from other countries, especially NATO members; and benchmarks to demonstrate the progress and value of the GOA contribution to the Australian public. With the release of the U.S. comprehensive strategic review, the additional inputs from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and other NATO countries, and the measurable goal of training Afghan forces to permit the ultimate exit of Australian forces, Australia can claim its conditions have been met. End comment.

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